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**Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address**

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| The speech was primarily addressed to the people of the South, and was intended to succinctly state Lincoln's intended policies and desires toward that section, where seven states had seceded from the Union and formed the [Confederate States of America](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_States_of_America). | The speech was intended for the South and the 7 states that seceded. |

Written in a spirit of reconciliation toward the rebellious states, Lincoln's inaugural address touched on several topics:

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| first, his pledge to "hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government"—including [Fort Sumter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Sumter), which was still in Federal hands; | The United States will keep their federal property in the South – all forts |
| second, his argument that the Union was undissolvable, and thus that secession was impossible; | The Union cannot and will not be dissolved or separated. |
| and third, a promise that while he would never be the first to attack, any use of arms against the United States would be regarded as rebellion, and met with force. | The South has to attack first before the North will attack. |

The inauguration took place on the eve of the [American Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Civil_War), which began soon after with the Confederate attack on [Fort Sumter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_Sumter).

Desperately wishing to avoid this terrible conflict, Lincoln closed the address with this impassioned plea:

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| " I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.” | The North and South have passion to do things the way they want (slavery/no slavery), but even though we disagree we must remain as friends if we want to survive. |

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| Lincoln was [chosen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1860_Republican_National_Convention) to be the [Republican](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Republican_Party_(United_States)) candidate in the [1860 presidential election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1860), which he won on November 6 with 180 electoral votes. Between this time and [his inauguration](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_inauguration_of_Abraham_Lincoln) on March 4, seven Deep South cotton states—[South Carolina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Carolina), [Mississippi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mississippi), [Georgia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georgia_(U.S._state)), [Florida](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Florida), [Alabama](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alabama), [Louisiana](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louisiana) and [Texas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Texas)—would [secede](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Confederate_States_of_America) from the Union. The entire nation, together with several interested foreign powers, awaited the President-elect's words on what exactly his policy toward the new Confederacy would be. | The 7 states that have seceded SC, GA, FL, AL, MS LA, and TX will have to wait for Lincoln’s policy towards their new government. |

Lincoln composed his address using four basic references: [Henry Clay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Clay)'s 1850 speech on compromise, [Daniel Webster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Webster)'s [reply to Hayne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Webster-Hayne_debate), [Andrew Jackson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson)'s proclamation against [nullification](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nullification), and the [United States Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution).

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| Lincoln opened his speech by first indicating that he would not touch on "those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety or excitement." | Do not change what doesn’t need to be changed. |
| The remainder of the speech would address the concerns of Southerners, who were apprehensive that "by the accession of a Republican Administration their property and their peace and personal security are to be endangered." | South is worried about losing their property and personal security to the Republican Administration – Lincoln’s Administration. |
| Lincoln emphatically denied this assertion, and invited his listeners to consider his past speeches on the subject of slavery, together with the platform adopted by the Republican Party, which explicitly guaranteed the right of each individual state to decide for itself on the subject of slavery, together with the right of each state to be free from coercion of any kind from other states, or the Federal government. | Slavery will be left up to the individual states – Popular Sovereignty. |

He went on to address several other points of particular interest at the time:

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| 1. **Slavery**: Lincoln stated emphatically that he had "...no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." | Lincoln will not interfere with slavery where it currently exists. |
| 1. **Legal status of the South**: He asserted that as he had just taken an oath "to [preserve, protect, and defend the United States Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oath_of_office_of_the_President_of_the_United_States)", this oath enjoined him to see that the laws of the Union were faithfully executed in all states—including those that had seceded. | The Constitution applies to all states including the South. |
| 1. **Use of force**: Lincoln promised that there would be no use of force against the South, unless it proved necessary for him to fulfill his obligation to "hold, occupy, and possess the property and places" belonging to the federal government, and to collect legal duties and imposts. However, if the South chose to actively take up arms against the Government, their insurrection would meet a firm and forceful response. | If the South becomes a threat to the North then it would become necessary for the North to retaliate. If the South attacks we will attack. |
| 1. **Secession**: Referring to words in the [preamble to the Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preamble_to_the_United_States_Constitution), Lincoln stated that the Constitution was established "to form a more perfect union" than the [Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Articles_of_Confederation) had effected. Since the Union established under the Articles was *explicitly* perpetual in name and text, thus the Union under the Constitution was equally perpetual. He added that even if the Constitution were to be construed as a simple contract, it could not be legally rescinded without an agreement between all parties, meaning *all* of the states, North and South. | The Constitution cannot be taken away without the approval from all involved – including the North and the South. |
| 1. **Protection of slavery**: Lincoln explicitly stated that he had no objection to the proposed [Corwin amendment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corwin_amendment) to the Constitution, which had already been approved by both houses of the [United States Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Congress). This amendment would formally protect slavery in those states in which it already existed, and assure to each state the right to establish or repudiate it. Lincoln indicated that he thought that this right was already protected in the original Constitution, and thus that the Corwin amendment merely reiterated what it already contained. | The Corwin amendment protects slavery in the states that it already exists. |
| 1. **Slavery in the Territories**: Lincoln asserted that nothing in the Constitution expressly said what either could or could not be done regarding slavery in the territories. He indicated his willingness to enforce the [Fugitive Slave Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fugitive_Slave_Act), so long as free blacks could be protected from being kidnapped and illegally sold into slavery through its misuse. | The Federal Government will enforce the Fugitive Slave Act and protect free blacks. |
| 1. **The postal service**: The [U.S. Mails](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Post_Office_Department) would continue to operate throughout the South, "unless repelled." | The U.S. Mail will continue in the South unless the South fought against it. |
| 1. **Federal offices in the South**: With no professional [civil service](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_service) in operation during this period of American history, Lincoln promised that he would not use the [spoils system](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spoils_system) to appoint Northern office-holders to federal offices, such as postmasterships, located in the Southern states. Instead, said he, he would "forego the use of such offices" rather than force "obnoxious strangers" upon the South. | The South will select who they want in federal positions in the South or suspend civil service in the South. |
| Lincoln concluded his speech with an eloquent plea for calm and cool but, deliberation in the face of mounting tension throughout the nation. He assured the rebellious states that the Federal government would never initiate any conflict with them, and indicated his own conviction that once "touched" once more by "the better angels of our nature," the "mystic chords of memory" North and South would "yet swell the chorus of the Union." | Lincoln calls for calm and states the Federal government will not initiate any conflict with the South. |